

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 151713Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSZ NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4956
INFO AMCONSUL ZURICH
USDAO DAKAR

S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 0090

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GGDZD
TAGS: MASS MR
SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN ARMS REQUEST AND SNIM

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 34 (NOTAL); ZURICH 21

1. EFFORTQSBY SNIM EUROPEAN PURCHASING OFFICE TO "ARRANGE CONFIDENTIAL PURCHASE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED MACHINE GUNS AND MORTARS" PLUS AMMO IS PUZZLING IN VIEW OF (A) SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF MILITARY HARDWARE MAURITANIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE AL-OEREADY RECEIVED FROM MOROCCO AND FRANCE, AND (B) ADDITIONAL QUANTITIES OF BROAD RANGE OF EQUIPMENT WE UNDERSTAND FRENCH ARE IN PROCESS OF DELIVERING. FACT SNIM REPRESENTATIVES ARE SEARCHING FOR MACHINE GUNS IS PARTICULARLY PUZZLING GIVEN KNOWN FRENCH DELIVERIES OF THIS TYPE F WEAPON AND OFFICIAL GIRM REQUEST TO USG FOR US-MADE 50S.

2. ENTRY INTO ARMS BUSINESS BY MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT'S MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRIAL HOLDING COMPANY IS PERHAPS RESULT OF FRANTIC SEARCH FOR ARMS (AMID CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FLAILOFG AROUND) IN IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF FIRST ALGERIAN-ASSISTED POLISARIO ATTACKS ON IRON ORE RAILROAD AND NORTHERN SETTLEMENTS. RESORT TO SNIM WHILE UNUSUAL PERHAPS REFLECTS AS WELL REALIZATION THAT SNIM STAFF HAS MORE EXPERINECE IN MAKING LARGE PURCHASES OF COMSVTEKIAND SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT FROM ABROAD THAN

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ANY OTHER SEGMENT OF GIRM.

3. WHATEVER ELSE IT MAY MEAN, SNIM APPROACH TO AMCONSUL ZURICH CLEARLY INDICATES AND UNDERSCORES SHARP AND CONTINUING GIRM CONCERN FOR SECURITY OF ITS "ECONOMIC LIFE LINE" AS MINISTER OF STATE SIDI 'ABDALLAHI CHARACTERIZED 600-KILOMETERNGONG RAILROAD LINKING IRON MINES AND ATLANTIC LOADING PORT IN HIS EXPLANATION/JUSTIFICATION FOR ARMS REQUEST.

4. IF SNIM PURCHASING OFFICE STAFFERS APPROACH AMCONSUL ZURICH AGAIN, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH INSTRUCT CONSULATE REPRESENTATIVE TO REITERATE USG REQUIREMENT FOR MUNITIONS CONTROL EXPORT LICENSE AND TO SUGGEST THAT THIS REQUIREMENT IN EFFECT MAKES DIRECT GIRM APPROACH TO USG ON GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS ALMOST MANDATORY. THIS SHOULD SLOW TP ACTION DOWN A BIT. SUBSEQUENTLY, IF WE DECIDE TO RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY TO JANUARY 7 REQUEST, I CAN, IN CONTEXT CONVEYING OUR RESPONSE, RAISE QUESTION OF SNIM'S ZURICH MANEUVERINGAIAND ATTEMPT TO SORT OUT THIS UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH.HANDYSIDE

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